

VZCZCXRO7410
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3766/01 3191504
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 151504Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4379
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003766

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2027
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESSES VICE PRESIDENT HASHIMI TO PUSH
FORWARD ON LEGISLATION

REF: BAGHDAD 3730

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (S) Reinforcing the USG message on importance of finalizing benchmark legislation and a joint statement on the Strategic Partnership Dialogue (SPD), the Ambassador and visiting Iraq Coordinator Ambassador Satterfield met with Vice President Tariq al Hashimi on the evening of November [¶12.](#) Hashimi sought details on the SPD process, claiming that he had only just received the draft statement. His questions on substance and process hinted at disquietude over not being involved until now in the discussion. Responding to the Ambassador's admonishments regarding lack of GOI progress on benchmark laws, particularly De-Baathification reform, Hashimi urged that the Leaders' version stemming from the August leaders' talks be sent directly by the Presidency Council to Parliament, by-passing the Cabinet. Hashimi confirmed that Tawafuq was given two weeks by PM Maliki with which to agree on a list of cabinet ministers with which to reinstate Tawafuq in government. Hashimi also confirmed he had commented publicly on the PM's announcement of plans to move forward on the issue of a general amnesty, and noted he would send a conciliatory open letter to Maliki on the issue. Asked about accusations that his office had vetoed a draft pension law, Hashimi (after first denying any connection) was informed by his staff that he had indeed returned the bill to Parliament for additional work (a move he claimed was merely "technical."). End summary.

[¶2.](#) (SBU) Joining the meeting were NSC Senior Director Brett McGurk, Poloff (note-taker), Vice President Hashimi's Chief of Staff, and Political Advisor Dr. Khalil al Ezzawi.

Long Term Strategic Relations

[¶3.](#) (S) Revisiting a topic discussed briefly at their last meeting (Reftel), the Ambassador stressed the importance of quickly finalizing a joint statement of principles related to the U.S.-Iraq long-term strategic partnership. A draft statement, which NSC Senior Director McGurk is currently negotiating with senior GOI officials, is being considered for release as early as "next week." Hashimi, seeming surprised by the proposed timing, stated he had just received a copy of the draft statement from NSA Rubaie. He then sought clarification on USG thinking, on the "purpose" of the document, and details on who was responsible for negotiating the text. Following the Ambassador and Iraq Coordinator Satterfield's call for cooperation, Hashimi said he "needed time to study" the text.

¶4. (S) The Ambassador raised the importance of GOI action to pass benchmark legislation, reminding the Vice President that none of the laws discussed in the August 26 Leaders Communique have been passed after nearly three months of dawdling and disagreement. Specifically, on the De-Baathification law, President Talabani had told the Ambassador that it was feasible to send the leaders' version directly from the Presidency Council to the Council of Representatives (CoR) to avoid the legal wrangling and interference by the Cabinet. Hashimi responded that he had argued this approach since the August talks concluded, accusing Maliki of game-playing and delay tactics. The Ambassador requested Hashimi to coordinate with his co-Vice President Adil Abdel Mehdi to ensure the leaders' draft is transferred promptly, and directly to the CoR for a first reading. (Note: Hashimi's Chief of Staff called poloff shortly after the meeting to convey that Hashimi called Abdel Mehdi, but the latter proposed obtaining a letter from the Prime Minister stating his consent to such a plan of action. End note).

Tawafuq Return to Government?

¶5. (S) The Ambassador raised the topic of a possible return to government by the Sunni Tawafuq bloc, noting the "irony" that its departure from government in August coincided with security improvements which have finally permitted the GOI to make progress on service delivery and further security improvements. Hashimi responded that Tawafuq was prepared to

BAGHDAD 00003766 002 OF 002

return to government "tomorrow," provided PM Maliki shows receptivity to Tawafuq's demands. So far, he stated, the PM has ignored the Sunni demands.

GOI General Amnesty Talk

¶6. (S) Referring to one of Tawafuq's main demands -- amnesty/detainees -- the Ambassador raised the PM's November 11 press conference in which he stated his decision that "all those who were misled or those who committed certain violations should be granted amnesty." Calling it a good indicator of the PM's thinking, the Ambassador confirmed that Hashimi was aware of the decision but was not yet engaged with the PMO/GOI on the issue. Hashimi said he wanted to be involved, and noted his positive public statement the day before in Fallujah, where he thanked the PM in front of a crowd of local Sheikhs and journalists for the positive step. Hashimi said his intent was to send a clear signal to Iraqis that his dispute with Maliki was not "personal." He continued, "if Maliki moves in the right direction, we'll support him." Ideally, he added, the PM will follow through on his promise and make releases in time for the coming Feast of Sacrifice (Eid al Adha) in approximately a month -- traditionally a time to release prisoners. (Note: Hashimi said he sent a letter to Maliki on the issue -- later shared with Poloff -- in which he commends the PM for taking this step. End note.)

Hashimi Holding Up Pension Law?

¶7. (S) The Ambassador also enquired into reports that the Office of the Vice President (i.e., Hashimi) had recently vetoed a draft Pensions Law. Hashimi initially denied connection to the issue, stating that the accusation was "propaganda" against him. One of his staffers, however, dialed a colleague that tracks the issue and gave the phone

to the Vice President. Following a short conversation, Hashimi admitted to the bill being held up by his office, but declared the issue was "technical," vice political. He promised to send the Embassy his staff's notes to show that the objection was not motivated by politics. The Ambassador encouraged Hashimi's office to ensure the draft bill is reconsidered with a close eye on its financial implications.

CROCKER